

AN OPEN LETTER TO
JESUS CHRIST

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It is quite possible some people may deem it improper that a letter addressed to the distinguished personage named above should be written, but we cannot so regard it. Countless prayers and appeals are daily made to him from all sorts of people, from all sorts of places, and upon all sorts of subjects. Everyone says or asks what he pleases, and no man is authorized to dictate what shall be said. A prayer is an appeal; a letter is another form of appeal. Any individual has a right to either form. That a letter is any more improper than a prayer is not obvious, and in this case a letter is preferred:

To His Excellency, IMMANUEL J. CHRIST, otherwise called "Prince of Peace," "Sun of Righteousness," "Lion of the Tribe of Judah," "Wonderful," "Counsellor," "The Messiah," "The Redeemer," "The Savior," "The Bridegroom," "The Lamb of God," "Captain of our Salvation," "Son of God," "Son of Man," etc., etc.

Respected Sir: Learning from our daily papers that it is expected you will pass a few days in our immediate vicinity, in company with your agents, Moody and Sankey, who are supposed to be in your special service, and who have just commenced a grand starring engagement through our principal cities, in your interest, I embrace this opportunity to address you in this manner, hoping I may be able to attract your attention and to receive a reply. I am in quest of truth, and many say it is to be found with you, and to attain any good gift

whatsoever of you, it is only necessary to ask. I wish knowledge and information on many subjects, and I hereby make my wants known, I trust with due respect and in a proper spirit. If I have not troubled you latterly as often as many do, I hope it will not disparage my chances of recognition.

If your memory serves you, you probably can bring to mind that something over a quarter of a century ago I was in the habit of addressing you regularly four or five times a day, and from one year's end to another, but finally coming to the conclusion that my appeals were not heard, or that they availed me nothing, I discontinued them, thus saving much time and breath, as well as disappointment also, and losing nothing, so far as I was able to judge. After a silence of more than twenty-five years, it is hoped this effort will be successful; but if it is not, I shall not be greatly surprised.

I shall not have room in one letter to enquire of you all I wish to know, but if I am successful in obtaining answers to these questions, I may sometime address you again, but, in any event, I trust I approach you in a proper spirit, and that I give no offence. I wish not to be impertinent, but to indicate to you the points upon which I need light. If you are truly the source of light, may I not hope to be successful?

In nearly all the lives and biographies that have been written of you, a great lack exists of a description of the days of your infancy, childhood, and youth. How is it that the "Evangelists," who are said to have been divinely delegated to write your life and teachings, should have been so silent in reference to this interesting portion of your existence?

Were those items purposely suppressed, or was it simply accidental?

Should not a truthful record of you have contained a full account of your early life as well as your later?

There is a great uncertainty relative to the origin of your existence; the account we have seems to rest largely upon a dream which it is said your stepfather dreamed. May I ask you, is that account reliable?

Is a dream of such a nature and character – that too, when related by a third person – as to safely build the faith of a world upon, especial when the final salvation of that world depends upon the correctness and infallibility of that faith?

Were you begotten by the Creator of the Universe?

Were you begotten by the same process as all other beings have been, who have lived in this world, or was it out of the ordinary course of nature?

Did love have ought to do in the transaction? And if so, was it an example of “free-love?”

Did the occurrence cause any scandal in the neighborhood, and was it generally understood that your step-father had dreamed out the true theory?

Your friends, the clergy, assert that you existed as an individual from all eternity, and that your begetting and birth, eighteen hundred and seventy-five years ago, was merely a formality for the purpose of endowing you with the quality of mortality. Is that so?

Did you, then, retain your consciousness during the nine months of your gestation? If so, may I ask, did not such close confinement for so long a period become irksome?

Had you full consciousness during the days of your infancy?

Was the star which was said to point out to the wise men who sought you in the stable in which you was born, a real star like others, millions of miles away, and which are immense bodies of matter, or was it a little star gotten up especially for the occasion and which moved near the surface of the earth?

Was it so important that those men from the East should find you, while yet a new-born babe, that a star should be delegated to leave its course to point out to them your precise locality?

Do you remember the critical period of “cutting teeth”?

Was there any “Mrs. Winslow” in those days to prepare “Soothing Syrup” for the babies?

Were you much troubled with colic, croup, bowel-complaint, or worms?

At what age did you have the mumps, the measles, and the whooping-cough? Did you have them light or severe?

Did you wear petticoats when you were little, and can you remember your first pair of pants?

Can you remember when you first began to run out of doors and play with the boys and girls?

Did you know, when you was a little boy, that you were God, and the Ruler of the Universe?

Is it true as narrated in the New Testament, styled “Apocryphal,” that when you were a small child and traveling with your mother, she placed you on the back of a mule that, by enchantment, had been changed from a young man, and that you transformed him back to a young man again?

Is it true that you rolled up clay in the form of birds, and then made them fly away in the air?

Did the water in which your mother had washed you cure two sick children?

Did you cause a boy to die because he carelessly ran against you?

Did you go to school and did you like to study?

Did you learn rapidly?

Did you know all things from all time, including the ordinary branches of education taught in schools, or did you have to study and learn like other boys?

Did you ever play hookey? Were you fond of boyish sports? Were marbles, “hop-scotch,” leap-frog and base-ball in vogue at that time?

Did you ever fall in love with any girls of your age, and if so, did anything serious come of it?

How old were you when you commenced working at the carpenters’ trade?

Did you stretch boards, doors, etc., for your stepfather when he made them too short?

How did you like the carpentering business?

If you were God, and knew all things past, present, and future, why did you not get up some such inventions as sawing mills, planing mills, mortising machines, matching machines, or scroll and circular saws, which for the last fifty years have proved themselves so valuable in saving labor?

Why did you not leave some such invention behind you to assist in immortalizing your name?

How came you to quit the carpenters’ business? Was it not a good trade at that time?

Did you like preaching and performing miracles better?

Have you ever doubted whether your first miracle, changing water into wine, at the wedding in Cana, was well advised, especially as the guests were already drunk?

Have you not many times, with sadness, noticed the bad effects of intemperance and the undue use of intoxicating drinks?

Have you ever thought that the miracle alluded to was setting a bad example to young people and an encouragement to wine-bibbers?

Did it ever occur to you that it was not strictly moral, and not according to the commandments, to go into other people's corn fields on the Sabbath and pluck corn, without permission?

Upon mature reflection, do you still think you were right and reasonable when you got angry at the fig-tree and cursed it because it did not bear figs at an untimely season of the year?

Was it not offering a reward for theft – a premium for crime – to demand, when a man's coat is stolen that his cloak also should be given to the thief?

Do you now think it would be sensible for a man to pluck his eye out if he had gotten dirt in it, if it became inflamed, or if any defect in the sight occurred?

If a man should have a boil or a felon on his right hand, would you still advise him to cut it off?

Would it not be better to remove the offending disease, rather than destroy the organ or part brought into affliction?

Do you at present think it was amiable and filial in you to treat your mother with disrespect, as when you asked, "Who is my mother?"

May I ask, do you still require your followers to hate father, mother, brother, sister, wife and children, on your account?

Does it afford you any pleasure for a man to hate his own blood relations?

Is it a correct principle in morals, that a person be required to hate his parents, his brothers and sisters, wife and children?

Do you still think it kind and god-like to damn people to endless punishment because they do not believe that which they cannot believe?

Can a person believe just what he pleases, whether convinced or not?

Do you still think the example of mendicancy and idleness the best example you could have set your fellow men?

Is not the doctrine, “take no thought for the morrow,” calculated to prevent enterprise, thrift, and forethought? Would we have anything to eat in winter, if we did not prepare for it in summer?

Was it strictly right for you to instruct your disciples to take an ass or a mule to which they had no right?

Was it a mark of amiability and peacefulness on your part to whip, and beat, and scourge the money-changers and those who sold merchandise in the temple?

Would you not have a lively time now, were you to scourge with cords all who are engaged in that business?

Can you explain the discrepancy between your prediction and its fulfillment, as to the end of the world, when you said: “Verily I say unto you this generation shall not pass away until all these things are fulfilled?”

Did you not at that time think the end of the world was near at hand, and were you not mistaken? When you went without food for forty days and forty nights in the wilderness, did you not endanger your life? Can a man now go forty days without food or drink, and live?

When the Devil took you up into a very high mountain and showed you all the kingdoms of the earth, did he carry you, as boys say, “pig-back,” or in what way did he carry you?

How high was the mountain?

Could you see the countries on the opposite side of the globe any better for going on to a high mountain?

Did you get a good view of Rhode Island and New Jersey?

Did you at that time know the earth is a round ball, or did the person know it who wrote the account?

Did you know at the time you were accompanying the Devil on this mountain trip, that he was your deadliest foe, as well as the great enemy of the human race?

When you were riding on his back through the air, why aid you not embrace the opportunity and choke the villain to death?

Would it not have been the greatest favor you possibly could have conferred upon the human race?

Would it not have been vastly better than to be yourself put to death?

Did it please your loving Father better that you should die, than his old enemy and creature, the Devil?

Did your blood pacify his disturbed feelings better than the Devil’s would?

Does blood actually appease your Father’s anger?

Did not the blood of bullocks, rams and he-goats, formerly have that effect?

Does he still have a fondness for blood?

Were the chemical constituents of your blood materially different from other men's, that it could exert a more potent effect upon the anger of your Father?

If it was either through the plan of your Father, or through the intrigues of the Devil that you were put to death, was there not partiality and injustice in the business?

Did it do your Father any good, or the Devil any harm, for you to die?

Would it not have been better for your Father, for yourself and for the whole world, if the Devil could have been the one to be put to death and then had remained dead?

What was the Devil ever made for?

Was it not the greatest mistake, the greatest folly that was ever committed?

Had there been no Devil, would not everything have been lovely with everybody, and would there have been any one to vex your Father?

Does not the Devil get fully nine-tenths of the whole human family, and does he not annoy your Father and yourself more than all the world besides?

Why is it you still suffer him to live?

Is it because you need him to officiate as Chief-Burner-General in the nether regions of brimstone, and to carry out your will in pitching and punching and burning poor hapless beings to the latest moments of eternity, and who had no hand

in bringing themselves into existence or in getting up the vile natures with which they are endowed?

Is there not really a tacit, secret understanding – a partnership in fact – between the Devil, your Father and yourself?

Does not the Devil carry out the wishes of your Father and yourself, in punishing and tormenting his helpless victims?

Could he be more faithful in your service, if he occupied the same throne with you?

If men act badly, or fail to meet the approbation of your Father or yourself, does not Christian theology teach that the Devil torments them for it?

Would your grand scheme of salvation be worth anything without the Devil?

Is not the Devil in the divine programme a personage equally as important as your Father or yourself? Could you get along without a Devil?

Would the system of theology which we have in this country, and which is attributed to you, be worth a row of pins without a Devil in it?

Could your sixty thousand clergymen in this country, or the six hundred thousand in Christendom, get along without a Devil?

Would their business pay running expenses except for a Devil to warm it up?

Really, after all, considering how much the Devil has done toward carrying out the divine plan concocted by your father and yourself; how much he has done for the human race by introducing education, science, inventions, innovations, and Freethought, into the world, while your clergymen and your

church have been doing all they could to keep them out, is he not, after all, a pretty good fellow?

Is he really as cruel and relentless as the clergy represent him?

Is it your Father or the Devil that is the most revengeful and unforgiving?

Let me ask you, can you be happy in heaven, seated on the throne at the right hand of your Father, the four beasts near, with the hundred and forty-four thousand saints dressed in white robes, bowing continually before your throne, and singing the song of Moses and the Lamb, that song which no man can learn; I ask, can you be happy thus, while you know the poor, wretched, unfortunate damned are writhing and screaming in the torments of hell?

Do not the shrieks of the damned wretches sometimes penetrate even to your throne and overpower, for the moment, that continuous song of Moses & Co.?

Can you be completely happy thus surrounded, when you know countless millions of poor, weak creatures are suffering the most excruciating tortures?

Infidel, as I am, I could not be happy under such circumstances, and were I to believe it possible that ninety-nine hundredths of the human race are doomed to forever suffer such tortures without cessation or alleviation, I should heartily curse existence and the author of it.

Would it not be vastly better to allow those pitiful wretches to go out of existence than to keep them in endless torment?

What possible good can it do your Father, yourself or any being to punish eternally quintillions of poor fallible men and women?

Is there no possibility of ending this most wretched and damnable business?

To return; when the Devil took you up into that high mountain, to show you all the kingdoms of the earth, and when he offered them to you, did you not know that he did not own a foot of them, and that they belonged to the estate of your Father?

If you knew this, was it much of a virtue in you that you did not accept his offer and yield to temptation?

Do you think it was a sharp thing in the Devil to undertake to play such a game with a God?

Was not the Devil, who could transport you on to the top of a high mountain, equally as large and as strong as yourself?

Was he the same Devil, or the same sized Devil that you subsequently cast out of the wild man you found raving among the tombs?

If that was a full-sized Devil, how could he get into the man?

Mark says the Devil left the man and went into two thousand swine; were there two thousand devils in the man, or did the one Devil divide up into two thousand parts?

When the two thousand swine rushed down a steep place into the sea and were drowned, what became of the Devils? Were they drowned, or did they enter the fishes?

Mark says all these Devils were in one man, and Matthew says there were two men that had the Devils, which was correct? Did Matthew see double?

If one told the truth, did not the other tell a falsehood?

If you sent those devils into two thousand hogs, thus causing their destruction, is it strange that the people, when they learned the fact, wished you to depart from their coasts?

Would any of our Western stock-growers welcome your visit now, if you should thus cause the destruction of their herds?

Were those devils that you sent into the swine the same kind as the seven Devils which you extracted from Mary Magdalene?

What was the size of those seven devils? Where did they enter, and where did they make their exit?

Is not all this business devilish strange, any way?

If your death was necessary to the happiness of the world, to the serenity and peace of your Father's mind; if you had to die, that one in ten, or one in a hundred of poor, doomed humanity might escape the suffering vouchsafed to all the rest, and by which grand process your Father is to be eternally glorified, did not Judas play a commendable part?

If you had to be betrayed before you could be tried and crucified, was not the betrayal most essential?

If this is so, is it not wrong to despise Judas and hold him in detestation for the important work he performed?

Should not he rather be canonized by your Church as a saint of the first water?

How could a single being ever have found salvation, had there been no Judas?

Were not the Jewish priests who urged on your death and destruction, also important factors in the grand, divine scheme?

Were not the Roman soldiers who performed the closing part of the melodrama, also worthy of special honor and distinction?

If you knew the results of your death, in redeeming a few doomed souls from the burning sea of sulphur, were of such vast importance, why did you so dread the special work you came to perform – the glorious death you came to die?

Was there aught of fear or faltering in your mind and courage when you so frantically reproached your Father for forsaking you?

Did you really think he had turned his back upon you, when you cried out so piteously, “*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*” (My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me)?

Do you think you met death as bravely as did Socrates, Regulus, and numerous others of those brave heroes of olden times?

Should a God, in facing death, have less courage, less fortitude, and less equanimity than a man?

Did you know that your death would be the most glorious event in the whole history of the world?

Did you consider it any more for you to die than for any other individual to pass through the same ordeal?

Have not hundreds of thousands of men and women endured the pains of dissolution with far more fortitude than you did, though their sufferings were many times greater?

Let me ask you was the six hours during which you were suspended on the cross sufficient to take a man’s life?

Did you absolutely die, or was it merely a case of fainting or swooning?

Did darkness cover the earth in consequence of your suspension upon the cross? Where was the sun during those three hours?

Was an earthquake, also produced in consequence of your sufferings, and did the graves open and the dead walk out alive and mix again with their former companions?

If this extraordinary affair really occurred, why was Matthew the only one of your biographers to notice it, when mere trivial events were minutely related by all, and why did not some historian say something about it?

Did you keep the engagement you made at that time with the thief, that he should be that day with you in paradise?

Did you not, rather, take the opposite direction and spend the interim between your death and resurrection in the heart of the earth, according to your prediction, or “in hell,” as the Bible and Apostles’ Creed have it?

Did you not find the interior of the earth intensely hot, and a very uncomfortable place to be in?

If you were to pass three days in the heart of the earth did it not necessitate you traveling four thousand miles through dense, super-heated matter to get there?

Did you not find the great density of matter a great impediment to your travel?

If it was foretold by yourself and others that you should be three days in the heart of the earth, how could you make two nights and one day fill the bill?

Are one day and two nights-aggregating at the most forty-eighty hours – equal to three days, or seventy-two hours?

Had the extreme heat of the interior of the earth anything to do with your returning before your time was up?

Did you not make excellent time to go four thousand miles to the heart of the earth and return in two nights and a day? Did you have much time to tarry there?

Let me ask you as to your ascension; did your physical body, the same that was laid in the sepulchre, ascend?

How high did your journey extend?

Did you not find the upper air extremely rare and intensely cold?

Can a physical body of flesh and blood exist for ten minutes at a distance of ten miles from the earth?

As the earth travels through space at a velocity of sixty-eight thousand miles an hour, does that fact make any difference as to the direction, route or distance from earth to heaven?

How is it that the four evangelists differ so widely in reference to your ascension, Matthew representing that you ascended from a mountain in Galilee, Mark stating that the ascension took place in a room where the eleven were at meat, Luke having it that you led your disciples out to Bethany, where you made your ascension, while John says nothing about your going up at all?

How could such an important event in your career be so differently stated by the four?

If either was right, were not the others wrong?

Should not persons divinely inspired to write an account of such an extraordinary event be able to agree better in their versions?

Would such kind of testimony have any value in an ordinary court of justice?

Could a case of sheep stealing be established on such evidence?

Has the great similarity between many characters in the heathen mythologies and your own, ever attracted your attention?

Are you not aware that the main facts, or what are claimed as facts, in your history appear to have been copied from similar legends pertaining to preexisting individuals?

Were not Buddha, Christna, Sakia, Zulis, Bacchus, Hercules, Alcides, Hesus, and several others who lived, or were claimed to have lived, hundreds of years before, said to have been born of virgins and to have a God for a father?

Should the world hold these personages in holy reverence because it is said of them, they were begotten by Gods and without their mothers losing their virginity?

Have we not as much proof of this remarkable conception in each of these cases, as in your own, when yours only rests on a dream?

Can the mere assertion, in either case, be sufficient to demand the belief of any sensible person?

Was it not said of many of them, that they had disciples, to whom they taught excellent morals, and before whom they performed wonderful miracles?

As the stories about them are much older than yours, would it be fair to suppose theirs were copied from yours?

Were not Christna, Sakia, Thammuz, Wittoba, Iao, Hesus, Quexalcote, Quirinus, Prometheus, Thulis, Indra, Alcestos, Atys, Crite, Bali, Mithra, and still others, all of whom lived centuries before your time, claimed to have been crucified as expiations for the sins of the world?

Is not the proof that these personages lived and died in the manner represented, equally reliable and probable as in your case?

Were not the believers in those ancient creeds and superstitions just as sincere, just as honest, and just as virtuous as those who believe in you?

If your life and death upon the earth were a divine plan, devised in heaven, is it not a little singular that it should be so perfect a pattern after so many similar schemes previously gotten up by pagan religionists?

Is God under the necessity of borrowing his plans from barbarians and ignorant heathens?

Are not the striking similarities between the various mythologies the world has known, enough to cause any thinking person to believe each system was borrowed from some similar system?

As Christianity is the youngest mythology of the lot, does it not seem probable that it is wholly a plagiarism?

When you uttered your best and grandest sentiments and morals, did you know that the same had been uttered by many, hundreds of years earlier?

Do you know it now?

Do you know that what is called the “Golden Rule,” was written much earlier and taught by Confucius, Pittacus, Socrates, Sextus, Isocrates Hillel, and others, who all lived before you?

Did you give any of these persons credit for any of the sentiments borrowed from them?

Were not the sentiments and morals taught by these old pagans, when the same as yours, equally as worthy of veneration and praise as when uttered by yourself?

Had not nearly every moral sentiment which was attributed to you been taught by others before you?

Is any given maxim or truth more true, or more beautiful for being spoken by a God or demi-god?

Is not the same maxim when pronounced by a man just as true and as admirable as when from a God?

Is it just to transfer to any individual the credit and honor that has been earned by another?

Would it not be just as right that we should revere and honor Confucius, Pythagoras, Plato, and others for the excellent morals they have taught, as to give you all the praise for inculcating the same?

Have you observed the striking coincidence between the accounts of yourself and of Apollonius of Tyana, who was born before you, and did not die until after you did?

Are you not aware that he was said to have practiced great self-denial, to have given away his worldly possessions, to have spent his time in prayer and meditation; to have had a band of disciples whom he instructed in godliness and virtue; that he performed wonderful miracles, among which was raising the dead?

Are you conscious that the evidence of such a person having existed, is stronger than of your own, and that he traveled more extensively; that he lived to be an old man; that he established institutions of learning, and wrote many works that were handed down to posterity, and which is more than is true of you?

Had this character, by any fortunate circumstances – this demigod, as he was esteemed to be – been taken as the deity of Europe, or the head of its theology, would not his name have been as widely spread and as greatly revered as your own now is, and as justly?

Are you not aware that there is great uncertainty relative to the account of your career on the earth?

Do you not know that there is no proof of what are called the “four gospels” being in existence before the latter part of the second century; that none of the “early fathers” ever referred to them or mentioned them before Eusebius, who died in the fore part of the third century?

With the knowledge we have of the many frauds that were committed by the early fathers (and which they claim, too, were right and justifiable) are there not good grounds for doubting much of the story about yourself?

Were there not abundant chances at that time for narratives to be gotten up and palmed off as genuine?

Were there not more than forty of such gospel stories gotten up by different individuals, with about as much truth in the one as in the others?

Is it not most probable that they were all wrong?

Are you aware that the “four gospels were not decided by the church to be canonical till the fourth century, and that the other books of the New Testament were not taken into the Bible till the sixth century,” and that the councils of contentious and fighting bishops and priests who assembled together to decide which and what should be the word of God, indulged in a great amount of quarreling upon the subject, and that in one contest over the matter one bishop was kicked to death?

Is it strange, with these facts before us, that incredulous people honestly doubt the reliability and divinity of the book called the Bible?

Is it strange, in view of the great similarity between your life and teachings and those of your predecessors, that many should doubt the probability of your existence?

Is it not a fact that all the rites, ceremonies, sacraments, and usages of the creed called by your name are traceable directly back to pre-existent heathenism?

If this is true, can there be any harm in the world being apprised of it, and understanding the facts as they are?

If Christianity in the dark ages of the world has served a purpose and assisted somewhat in helping man to emerge from the mists, falsities, and superstitions of the primitive ages, does it follow that he should always continue to hug it to his bosom as a truth?

In fact, is it not time the world discarded all mythologies, man-made gods, mental crudities, absurdities, monstrosities, falsities, senseless creeds, superstitions, and impositions?

Are not Truth, Science, Reason, Fraternal Love, and Human Brotherhood vastly superior to all these?

Have not many of the propagandists of your religion been most bloody tyrants?

Was not Constantine, who murdered many of his own family, of this number?

Were not Charlemagne, Guy Lusignan, Torquemada, Alva, Philip II, John Calvin, Munzer, Claverhouse, and very many others of the same category?

Has not the religion called after your name caused more bloodshed, more persecution, and more suffering than all the other religions of the world?

When the terrible slaughters, massacres, and murders that have been committed in your name and in your cause, came to your knowledge, why did you not sometimes interpose and prevent these abominations?

Did you approve of that infernal institution called the “Holy Inquisition” which for five hundred years cursed the most populous portions of Europe, and before which hellish court were dragged at all hours of day and night, men and women, helpless, defenseless victims of priestly suspicion, avarice, and malice; and where without evidence or means of defense they were slowly and cruelly tortured on racks, wheels, and infernal machines of every possible conception, and where hot pinchers, pullies, thumb-screws, and the stake and fagot were used in thousands of instances?

Could you hear the cries and groans of these poor, helpless, tortured wretches, hour after hour, day after day, month after month, year after year, century after century, and never feel a particle of sympathy for the sufferers, and never stretch forth your hand or lift a finger to stay these most accursed wrongs?

Did you participate in the wars of the Crusades, when Christian Europe sent so many of her hardiest and bravest sons to wrest the Holy Land from the possession of the Infidel, which terrible wars lasted many years, and which caused the blood of scores of millions of human beings to saturate the earth?

Did you take part in other Christian wars by which unknown thousands and millions of hapless mortals were made to bite the dust?

Did you assist in the bloody persecutions, which continued for centuries, that were directed against the sincere, well-disposed, but most unfortunate Vaudois, Waldenses, Albigen-ses, the Moors of Spain, and the Huguenots of France, in which unparalleled cruelties of every conceivable character and the most profuse bloodshed took place?

If you did not aid in all this most infernal business transacted in your name, and by your church, were you totally unconscious of it?

If you knew of it, and possessed the power to stay the red hand of blood, the heavy hand of oppression, or the strong hand of death in this long night of gloom and horror, why in the name of all that is good, all that is merciful, all that is high and holy, why did not you, or your all-powerful father, stretch forth your hands and stay these gigantic wrongs?

Could beneficence, mercy, and love sit benignantly, placidly, and smilingly on a golden throne, with all power at hand, and never raise an arm to check this mad monster savagism, intolerance, cruelty, and death, which for so many long, weary years, in the name of the Christian religion, cursed the fairest portions of the earth?

As a God or as a man, have you at any time dispensed to the human race the blessings which would have been of the greatest value to them?

Would not natural truths, science, positive knowledge, and general education have been of infinitely more value to the world than the gift of your blood, or the relics of ancient paganism which you handed down, or which have been forced upon the world in your name?

Did not your bishops, your priests, and your church, a few centuries ago, do all in their power to hold back advancing light, intelligence, education, and science?

Were not the great discoverers of the truths of nature, the noble emancipators of our race from the rule of ignorance and error, systematically and persistently hunted down and persecuted?

Were not books, schools, and the printing press time and time again denounced as of the devil's agencies and opposed by Christian zealots to the extent of their power?

Were not the masses purposely kept in ignorance and filled with superstitious fallacies by those who claimed to be their religious and Christian teachers and guides?

Has not the advance which the world has made in education, science, and general intelligence been made in spite of, and in opposition to Christian leaders and the Christian church?

Let me ask you right here, As God, or as man, are you, or were you ever acquainted with what are called the Sciences?

Do you understand astronomy, chemistry, geology, biology, physiology, psychology, philology, mathematics, geometry, natural philosophy, and natural history in all its branches?

Are these not all valuable and beneficial to the human race and do they not help greatly in elevating man above the plane of barbarism, sensuality, and ignorance?

If you had known these, and had taught them to the world, would it not have been immensely better than to give your blood or to retail the mysticisms, parables, fables, beatitudes, and the impracticable injunctions which you presented to the world?

Is it not better and wiser now to follow in the light of science, reason, and truth than to adhere longer to any of the mythologies, superstitions, and absurdities of the past?

Has not man advanced as far as he has, by his own efforts, and is it not vastly better for him to depend upon his own powers, and to exercise them, rather than to look to gods, demigods, popes, bishops, or priests?

Have not these held the world back in ignorance, darkness, and slavery for thousands of years? Has not your church been signalized by the fallibility, vice, and ignorance of many of its leaders and rulers?

Have you been mindful of the villainous popes who have, from time to time, filled the papal chair, and who claimed to be your vice-regents and special favorites?

Did you approve the conduct of Gregory the Great in the sixth century, who was an aspiring, unscrupulous despot, notorious for his profligacy, cruelty, and crimes, and who sanctioned one of the most bloody assassinations ever perpetrated?

Was John XII in the tenth century a favorite of yours, who was an unscrupulous libertine, gambler, debauchee, and murderer, and who turned the Vatican into a brothel?

How did you like John XXIII in the fifteenth century, who was proved to have been guilty of seventy different kinds of crime, among which were sodomy, simony, rape, incest, and murder, and with having illicit intercourse with over three hundred nuns?

Do you not remember the delectable Alexander VI in the fifteenth century, who was guilty of incest, who seduced his own daughter, who was the father of many illegitimate children, and reeked in the most abominable crimes, and among the rest murder?

Can you approve of the conduct of many of your modern clergymen who have claimed to be bright lights in your galaxy of stars?

Have you not often had occasion to blush with shame and to redden with indignation at the base conduct of hundreds – yes,

thousands of licentious hypocrites who try to pass themselves off as shepherds and leaders of your flock?

Are not the ewe-lambs specially exposed to their seductive wiles and artifices, their sensual plots and lascivious designs?

Is it an indication of the purity and goodness of a cause when so many false lights and teachers are claiming to represent it?

Do not the clergymen, who loudly preach in your name, do quite as much to corrupt the morals of the world as they do to improve them?

Is not money, which in your book is called “filthy lucre – the root of all evil,” the main incentive which induces your clergy to engage in your cause?

Would their great love for “souls” impel them to devote their talent and lives to the work if the pay was not forthcoming?

Would not all the souls of men be suffered to go down to the eternal flames of burning sulphur if money was not liberally paid them to prevent such a sad catastrophe?

If there was no paying would there be much preaching and praying?

Can it comport with your sense of justice, honesty, and propriety to see these fat, lazy priests exact and obtain from the hard-working Mickies who carry the hod, and the Bridgets who attend to the roasts and stews in the kitchen, a large share of their hard earnings for the saving of their souls?

Were not many of the old pagan priests and teachers models of virtue and purity compared with your clergymen of modern times?

Do you approve in general of the rich, expensive churches and cathedrals of these times?

Are the \$250,000 churches and \$10,000 and \$20,000 pastors anything like the times when you were upon earth and wandered listlessly about the fields, on the streets of villages and in the country highways?

Would it not be better if these magnificent church places where Mr. Moneybags, Mrs. Grundy, and Mrs. Upper crust meet to worship alike the unknown God and the god of fashion, were all converted into industrial schools, hospitals for indigent widows, imbeciles, helpless cripples, the aged, the infirm, and all unable to do for themselves?

Could not many of them be profitably changed into halls of science, where the truths of nature, the useful arts, and the various vocations of life might be freely taught to all?

In view of the pride, arrogance, extravagance, and hypocrisy of the modern clergy, would it be unsafe to expunge them all as a bad lot?

Would not the hundreds of thousands of priests throughout Christendom, who are entirely an unproducing class, and are living upon the labor and sweat of the toiling classes, be much more profitably employed in useful and productive occupations, thereby earning an honest living?

If the masses who, through ignorance and mistaken notions of virtue and morality, are now induced to support these hordes of pampered, licentious priests, and to build and furnish these costly temples and churches, could be relieved of the onerous expense of all this; and if the priests, who labor not at all in the vocations of industry, were forced to do so, would not the hours of toil for the weary and overworked millions be materially lessened, and would there not be more time for rest, recreation, and mental improvement?

Do you like to see the priesthood of all your denominations calling upon their credulous dupes on every occasion for money, money, money, and all for Jesus the Redeemer's sake?

Are not the fashionable churches of the day mere aristocratic associations for an exclusive class, where they can foster pride, arrogance, and self-righteousness?

Are your moral maxims, your simple injunctions, and the lowly sentiments you inculcated upon earth, their guide and rule, or do they follow the fashions of the world, the vanities, the frivolities and gewgawry of dress, jewelry, fine silks, and grand display?

Are members of the churches really any better than the average of non-professing people?

Will the mouthing of your sayings, the calling upon your name, the mere profession of devotion to your cause, avail them without doing the work you prescribed?

If a rich man cannot by any possibility enter the kingdom of heaven, what is to become of large numbers of those calling themselves Christians?

Are not the people of pagan and heathen countries to-day more honest, more sincere, more simple-hearted, less designing, less hypocritical, less oppressive, less haughty and proud than a large portion of Christian professors?

Among all the nations of the earth, is there one nation where there is more stealing, more lying, more cheating, more fraud, more oppression upon the poor, and more cruelty, more heartlessness and more murder than in Christian lands?

Are not the precepts, maxims, and moral sentiments you enjoined used by your professed followers more as a cloak for

their heartless deception and their self-righteousness, and as a weapon in their controversies with themselves and their antagonists, than as a rule of life or the governing principle of conduct?

Does not the worship of gold, of avarice, of power of fashion, of respectability, of selfishness, control their actions and inspire their lives far more than the meek and lowly doctrines you enunciated?

In a few words, is not Christianity, as known and practiced in the world, a cheat, a fraud, a costly and an expensive luxury which mankind could well spare, losing nothing by its rejection?

Finally, as you now view the field, the past, the present, and the future, would it not, in your opinion, be better to wipe out from the face of the earth all priestcraft, superstition, sectarianism, falsehood, all the absurdities and monstrosities which have so preyed upon mankind, and to inaugurate an era of truth, reason, common sense, science, education, simplicity, fraternity, and humanity; discarding false gods, base devils, useless saviors, and degrading creeds. and to devote our time and attention to the improvement of this world and to the happiness of the human race?

Pardon me, Dear Sir, if I have been importunate or bold in my interrogatories. I feel that it is perfectly safe to inquire of you on all the subjects here touched upon, and upon which I wish information.

Should I be successful in obtaining answers from you, I will be encouraged to ask for more information. But as hinted at in the beginning of my letter, judging from the success I formerly met with, years ago, in the appeals I made to you in thousands of instances, I am prepared to not be disappointed if I receive no reply to this. I am respectfully, duteously, and hopefully,

A TRUTH SEEKER

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DeRobigne Mortimer Bennett (1818-1882) was 19th-century America's most controversial publisher and free-speech martyr. Bennett founded the "blasphemous" New York periodical the *Truth Seeker* in 1873, and his publications were censored and prohibited from news-stands long before the expression "banned in Boston" was heard. In less than a decade, the former Shaker and self-described Thomas Paine infidel became the most successful publisher of freethought literature in America – perhaps the world.

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